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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 000694

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SUBJECT: ELECTORAL COMMISSION UNVEILS PLANS FOR 2010 VOTE

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Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Rwandan election officials briefed the donor community October 15 on preparations for Rwanda's next presidential elections, set for August 9, 2010. Outstanding funding needs are modest at \$1.2m, and the electoral process will feature a twenty-day campaign period. Parliament is currently working on a new electoral code which will formalize many previously ad hoc procedures, and the NEC has begun to update voter registration lists and plans to issue new voter ID cards beginning in January 2010. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On October 15, National Electoral Commission (NEC) president Chrysologue Karangwa and executive secretary Charles Munyaneza briefed assembled members of the diplomatic corps on preparations for Rwanda's 2010 presidential elections. The meeting took place at MFA headquarters. Several other NEC members attended, as did representatives from various embassies, development agencies and international organizations. Munyaneza did virtually all of the speaking.

#### BUDGET

¶3. (SBU) According to Munyaneza, the NEC has estimated that elections and "general administration" will cost \$11.3m. The GOR allocated \$6.086m for elections in its FY09-10 budget, with more expected in FY10-11. Several donors have promised support for the elections through a joint basket fund arrangement: EU - 1m euros, Netherlands - 250,000 euros, DFID - 1m pounds, Sweden - 3m kronor, which in NEC's calculation amount to \$3.998m, leaving a financing gap of \$1.221m. Munyaneza made an open request for assistance in filling the gap, whether as part of the basket fund or not. Following the briefing, a JICA representative suggested the Government of Rwanda (GOR) "somehow" use a \$6m "counterpart fund" offered to the GOR by Japan, originally intended to pay government fuel expenses.

#### CALENDAR

¶4. (SBU) Munyaneza listed key dates in the process, based on the electoral code and approved by the cabinet on September 15:

- Nomination of presidential candidates: June 24-July 7
- NEC declaration of candidates' list: July 7
- Election campaigns: July 20-Aug 8
- Printing of ballot papers: July 9-Aug 5
- Accreditation of observers: June 15-Aug 6
- Publication of final voters' list: NLT July 23
- Polling day: Aug 9
- Declaration of provisional results: NLT Aug 11

--Declaration of final results by Supreme Court: NLT Aug 17  
Addressing the length of the campaign, Karangwa said that 20 days was "more than enough, in our experience," because Rwanda is a small country. Asked what activities parties could undertake prior to July 20, Munyaneza said they could prepare their campaign manifestoes, election strategies, and candidate lists, and would be able to hold public meetings and have access to the media. Regarding "publication" of results, Karangwa explained that many have requested written notification of results, but in the GOR's view, "what we want to do is announce the results publicly at individual polling stations," and that "political party representatives can monitor activities all day."

#### NEW ELECTORAL CODE

15. (SBU) According to Karangwa, the cabinet has already examined draft legislation for a new electoral code. It is currently in parliament and will likely pass in late November or early December. Key provisions include: consolidating and announcing voting results at the polling center, district and national levels (previously this was done at five levels: polling station, polling center, sector, district, and national); allowing disqualified candidates to "review their files" before announcement of the final candidates' list (Munyaneza noted there is no change to existing qualification criteria as specified in the current electoral code); communication of candidates' campaign schedules to NEC in addition to district mayors and state media, "in order to ensure mayors and state media are observing the law;" facilitating overseas voting by Rwandans in the diaspora; guidelines on conduct of other stakeholders in the electoral process, including political parties, civil society, observers and local authorities; a process for replacing

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appointed senators (this is currently unspecified); and description of circumstances under which the Supreme Court can nullify election results. Munyaneza noted that candidates are not eligible for state funding and have to finance their campaigns independently, but added that the GOR provides general funding for all parties through the Political Party Forum, and that parties can use this money for campaigning if they wish.

#### VOTER REGISTRATION, CIVIC EDUCATION

16. (SBU) Munyaneza briefed that the NEC expects 5.2m voters in 2010, up from 4.7m in 2008. It began updating voter registration lists in September, and in order to reduce fraud, will use a voter registration database that includes pictures of voters alongside their names and other data. Starting in January 2010, the NEC will issue approximately 700,000 registration cards to first-time voters and replace old ones. Munyaneza said the GOR has already been conducting intensive civic and voter education programs based on its national civic education policy and its information and communication strategy. It will conduct more of these activities in 2010 in collaboration with civil society and political parties, and intends to use "intensively" both public and private media as part of these efforts.

#### OBSERVERS

17. (SBU) Munyaneza said the NEC expected many observers, and that international organizations, individuals, foreign governments, and others can request observer status. The GOR already invited the EU (in response to an EU request), and the MFA and NEC would also invite other observers, including ones from the East African Community, African Union and other countries' NECs.

#### COMMENT

18. (C) President Kagame's ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front has

the advantage of incumbency at all levels of government, party structures and full-time cadres in every one of Rwanda's 416 sectors, ready access to state media, and a large war chest. Although the official campaign will last a mere 20 days, one senior GOR official admitted privately to Emboffs following the meeting that the real campaign had already begun. That Kagame will run and win is a widespread assumption. What is of interest is how well opposition parties and their leading figures fare both in terms of being able to operate freely over the next ten months and in their efforts to establish footholds for future electoral campaigns.

END COMMENT.

SYMINGTON